

The Berea Baptist Banner

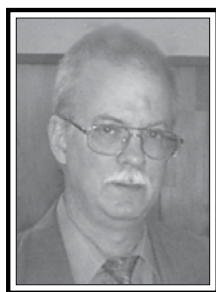
"Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth" Ps. 60:4

The Priesthood of Christ as Revealed in Scripture

By Lucien J. LeSage Jr.
of Pride, Louisiana

It seems that the priesthood of Christ is something that you hear very little about and yet the whole book of Hebrews presents to us our glorious high priest. You hear of Him as being saviour, which He is and the only saviour of sinners. You hear of Him being the Son of God which He is and the eternal One at that, but little about Him being the saved one's high priest. Speaking of Christ's priestly office, John Flavel (c. 1630-1691) said, "What promises flow out of the priestly office? All the promises of a pardon and peace flow out of it." Yes, Jesus Christ is a high priest. He is now my high priest. He is the eternal high priest and He has no successor as we shall show from the Scriptures. In chapter three of Hebrews Jesus Christ is called **"the Apostle and High Priest of our profession."**

The Book of Hebrews was written by the Apostle Paul, in my opinion, and it was written to Jewish Christians that were getting caught up in the Mosaic



economy and those sacrifices that were offered under the law of Moses. The Jews placed a lot of stock in that economy and that they were the children of Abraham. Think about it, the Jews had a Divine religion, and a divinely appointed place of worship. It was not as if they had come out of paganism. The God who made heaven and earth had given to Moses the law and all that went along with it. And so it would be natural that even those among them who had believed on Christ should want to retain the forms and ceremonies that pertained to the law in which they had been brought up. To the Pharisees Jesus said, **"Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me"** (John 5:45-46).

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Love from on High

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia

"We love him, because he first loved us" (I John 4:19).

The love of God is a vast subject. The love of God is a subject that hardly bears broaching, when we consider our own frail humanity, and our own finite minds, and our own physical, mental, and spiritual limitations. And yet, what grander subject is there? What more sublime topic is there, than to consider the love of God?

I want to consider the love of God from the perspective of the human recipients. In other words, I want to consider the love that we have for God, as a result of the love that God has for us. I do not know



if you have ever thought of it this way or not, but the love that you have for God – the love for God that you feel in your heart

– is a gift that comes from God, and a love that has its beginnings in Heaven, itself. Our love for God is a love that originates in Heaven, in the bosom of God. A love that is otherworldly. A love that is divine. A love with powers, abilities, and effects, which cannot be considered nor understood from a strictly physical or mortal perspective. Our love for God is a

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The Kind of Faith God's Children Need Today

By Christopher W. Burke, Sr.
of Catlettsburg, Kentucky

Beloved, how we need strong, Biblical faith today. In a world that is so chaotic, and unstable, and ever shifting and changing, we need a faith that will overcome. We need a faith that will endure all of life's trials, and the deceit of false religion, and the onslaughts of this old world, and of Satan. The love of many is waxing cold today. The fervency of true Christianity has cooled down to a dying ember. It was in this context that Jesus



said in Luke 18:8: **"Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"**

Let us now see the strong, Biblical faith in the person of Abraham, who was called the father of all who believe. Read Romans 4:16-25

From this text we will notice

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The purpose of the Berea Baptist Banner is as follows:

1. To honor God and to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. To preach the gospel to lost sinners.
3. To spread the whole counsel of God's Word.
4. To encourage God's preachers and to strengthen His churches in the most holy faith.
5. To motivate God's children to a closer fellowship around His Word.
6. To inform people of world events in light of Bible prophecy.
7. To condemn and expose error wherever it may rear its ugly head.
8. To stimulate Christian growth in grace.
9. To make the Devil and his demons as mad as possible.

The Priesthood of

(Continued from page 1) ♦

In the first few chapters of the book of Hebrews, the writer shows that Christ is greater than all that had gone before. He is greater than the prophets: **"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high"** (Heb. 1:1-3). Then we immediately read that He is greater than all the angels: **"Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the firstborn into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom"** (Heb. 1:4-8). And then we read in the book of Acts that the law was given **"by the disposition of angels"** (Acts 7:53); But Christ is greater than all the angels as the writer says.

Then in chapter three of Hebrews we see that the writer

shows that Christ is greater than Moses in whom they trusted. **"For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house"** (Heb. 3:3). As we read further we see He is greater than Joshua. The King James version has **"Jesus"** in verse 8 of chapter 4 but that is just the same meaning as Joshua. **"For if Jesus (Joshua) had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day"** (See Acts 7:45 as proof). In this same chapter we read, **"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession"** (Heb. 4:14). If we believe the Bible to be the Word of God, the apostle has told us enough for us to believe that Jesus is our high priest. But let us not simply leave it there. There is so much more to be understood concerning His priesthood.

Now, the Jews also placed a lot of stock in being the children of Abraham. When Jesus told those Jews that the truth would make them free they responded thus, **"We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free"** (John 8:33)? Now here is where we need to pay close attention to what the apostle says concerning Abraham and Melchisedec. Without going into a lot of detail we see that Melchisedec was a royal priest who blessed Abraham. When Abraham was returning from the slaughter of the kings he paid a tenth of the spoils to Melchisedec and Melchisedec blessed him. Well the apostle tells us **"and without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better"**

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(Heb. 7:7).

Before the apostle gets to this point in his epistle he brought to our attention what God said concerning His Son, **“Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec”** (Heb. 5:6). So what are the implications of this? And when was it written? What does that mean, “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec?” Who is this Melchisedec? Well he was a royal priest. He was king of Salem and priest of the most high God (see Hebrews 7:1-2). He blessed Abraham some four hundred years before the Law was given to Moses, and we read that the Aaronic priesthood paid tithes to Melchisedec being yet in the loins of Abraham when he met Melchisedec. Under the Mosaic Economy the priesthood was from the tribe of Levi, yet nothing is said about Melchisedec’s origin. There is no recording of who his parents were nor when he ever died. So in type he is a picture of another priest who should later arise after his order or after the similitude of his order as the apostle says in chapter 7. The apostle tells us concerning this Melchisedec, **“Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually”** (Heb. 7:3). I would add that under the Mosaic economy no king could offer a sacrifice. We see that Uzziah did so and was stricken with leprosy and was never cured. **“But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to**

burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men: And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God. Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son was over the king’s house, judging the people of the land” (II Chro. 26:16-21). Yet Melchisedec was a royal priest and Christ is a priest after the similitude of his priesthood. The tribe of Judah from which Messiah sprang was a royal tribe. Jesus Christ is a royal priest.

So, when was it prophesied that another priest should arise after the order of Melchisedec? Well by the mouth of David in Psalm 110:4, long after the Levitical priesthood had been established by Moses. If the Aaronic priesthood made the people perfect then what was the need for it to be prophesied years later that another priest should

arise? And that he would be after the order of Melchisedec and not after the order of Aaron. **“If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron”** (Heb. 7:11)? We also know from the section of the Old Testament concerning Messiah, which was written after the Mosaic Economy had been established, that our Lord would arise out of Judah **“of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood”** (Heb. 7:14). Now pay close attention to what the apostle says in verse 15 and 16 of chapter 7. **“And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.”** The apostle says **“similitude”** which means likeness to it. So Melchisedec’s priesthood pictured Christ’s priesthood. Melchisedec did not have a successor for he had an endless priesthood, so too with Christ’s priesthood. He is a priest forever and His priesthood is in the likeness of Melchisedec’s priesthood. The Levitical priesthood was not so but was **“after the law of a carnal commandment.”** This is important to see for Christ is eternally our great high priest **“who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens”** (Heb. 8:1). So **“he ever liveth to make intercession for them”** (Heb. 7:25). Christ has no successor to His priesthood for He continues to be the only priest the believer ever needs.

Let us now examine His priestly work. We have established that

He is our high priest and is still our high priest even now. But what about His priestly work? As John Flavel said, “All the promises of a pardon and peace flow out of it.” We see that as high priest He needed to make an offering. **“For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer”** (Heb. 8:3). As the apostle has stated perfection was not from the Levitical priesthood. But He was not as those Levitical high priests. Of Christ it is said, **“Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself”** (Heb. 7:27). So He offered up Himself for the sins of the people He represented. In chapters 8 and 9 we see that the apostle shows that the earthly tabernacle was but a pattern of the heavenly and that a new and better covenant was prophesied (see Jeremiah 31:31). In verse 9 of chapter 9 we see that the earthly tabernacle was a figure for the time then present and could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to conscience. In the previous verse we read, **“The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing”** (Heb. 9:8). So Christ made an offering for sin, but it was Himself. His death did not end His priestly work as was the case with the Levitical high priest but His death was part of His priestly work and the grave could not hold Him. Their death was no part of their priestly duties and ended their priesthood. His death was His priestly duty and was the very sacrifice which He

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offered as High Priest. They had no power to raise themselves back to service as priests. But the Son of God had power to lay His life down and raise it up again. His death did not even interrupt the exercise of His priesthood but was one of His duties as our Great High Priest. We saw earlier in chapter 7 that this He did once, or one time (Hebrews 7:27). In the book of Hebrews the apostle uses the word "once" or "one," seven times, in referring to the offering and sacrifice of Christ, while suggesting it in other places. Here are a few of those verses to prove the point: Hebrews 9:12, **"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."** Hebrews 9:24-28, **"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."** Hebrews 10:10-14, **"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest**

standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." It can be no clearer to the reader of Hebrews that Christ made only one offering for sin and we also read, **"Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin"** (Heb. 10:18). It is not that Christ made one offering for sin but some later offering must be made in addition. No, there is no more offering for sin. Christ said, **"It is finished."**

We have established that Jesus is a Royal Priest and an eternal high priest, and that He made only one offering for sin and that offering was even His very soul, according to Isaiah 53:10. And also that He ever liveth to make intercession for those that come to God by Him. So what of the efficacy of that sacrifice? What did that offering accomplish? Did it only make the purging of sin possible or did it in a judicial way accomplish something? I would draw your attention back to the very beginning of the book of Hebrews where this is answered immediately. **"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high"** (Heb. 1:3). Purge means to "perform a thing" according to Strong's and in this case to "cast out" and that "without delay." This speaks of sins in the judicial sense. We as believers still sin but the point is

that they were taken care of by the Lord Jesus Christ in His priestly work. Let us look at a few more verses in Hebrews that prove the point. **"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us"** (Heb. 9:12). So with His own blood He hath obtained eternal redemption for every believer and for every believer who will ever believe in Him. **"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God"** (Heb. 9:14)? **"...but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself"** (Heb. 9:26). And whose sins did He bear and put away? **"The sins of many"** (9:28). Then we read in Hebrews 10:9-10, **"Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."** Then in verse 14 we read, **"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."** This can be no more clearer if we would just believe it. His one offering hath perfected for all eternity the ones who were set apart by God. Sanctified means to set apart, and in this case it is passive. Notice they are sanctified not that they sanctified themselves. Personal sanctification takes place later in time at the new birth, but in this case all the ones that were sanctified judicially by God are perfected for ever. That is a long time, dear reader. That is a perfection without failure. That is a priestly work that is efficacious and which accomplished its very

purpose. And what was that purpose? **"...but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."**

When Jesus drank the cup of divine wrath in the place of the believer and all who will ever believe on Him, He drank that cup dry, as Spurgeon put it. If you belong to Him then there is nothing left in that cup of indignation for you, dearly beloved, because your Lord drank every drop in your place. It was not only an efficacious offering (accomplished its purpose) but vicarious (being substitutionary) as well. **"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"** (II Cor. 5:21). **"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree"** (Gal. 3:13).

Jeremiah prophesied of this day and he is quoted by the apostle in this epistle to the Hebrews. **"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more"** (Heb. 10:16-17). Then he adds, **"Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin"** (Heb. 10:18).

Dear reader, we need no man on this earth to be a priest for us. We have a high priest in heaven. A royal priest. We need no bloodless sacrifice on any altar. We have an altar, the Godhood of Christ. The believer is a priest unto himself in that he can offer the sacrifice of praise and can boldly go before the throne of Grace because our Great High Priest is there. In

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Little Hills

By Nathaniel Hille of
Plant City, Florida



Acquaint Now Thyself With Him #4

The Sight Of God
I Samuel 16:1-13

"But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (I Sam. 16:7).

We want to look at "the sight of God." But we will focus our attention upon the action, the duty of which the eyes do: sight.

GOD SEES NOT AS MAN SEES

Man only sees that which is without. The Lord sees it all. The Lord is able to see the heart, the motive, and even the very imagination of the thoughts of man's hearts (Genesis 6:5). Thus, the Lord is not fooled. **"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do"** (Heb. 4:13).

Our text brings out that man can only see the outward appearance of something. No man should ever say that he/she knows the motive behind what another person does. We only see the outward appearance and we do NOT see that very well at all. How often we are fooled by the outward appearance of an individual: **"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among**

you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). None of the disciples knew that Judas Iscariot was going to betray the Lord Jesus, but the Lord knew!

The Lord looks on the heart. Inward qualifications and endowments of the mind are seen by the Lord. The intent and spirit with which a man, woman, boy or girl acts is not known but by the Lord. There are many things that are beautiful to the eyes, but have not value in this life nor in the life to come. **"And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God"** (Luke 16:15).

THE DEITY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

The Lord Jesus manifested His deity in that He could see the contents of the Pharisees: **"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity"** (Matt. 23:27-28).

Christ Jesus knew the hearts of the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees. He knows the hearts of every person. He is not fooled. The Lord knows whether or not our hearts are right with Him

"For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant" (Ps. 78:37).

THE SIGHT OF GOD

What is precious in the sight of God: I Peter 3:1-7, **"...which is in the sight of God of great price"** (v.4). Here the Holy Spirit lists many things that are of great price in the sight of God. They are: subjection to your own husbands; chaste conversation, coupled with fear; adorning of the hidden man in a meek and quiet spirit. The world, even men today put no value on these things. They value outward beauty. Remember what was stated by King Lemuel's mother? **"Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised"** (Prov. 31:30). The Bible refers to **"the beauty of holiness"** (Ps. 29:2; 96:9; I Chro. 16:29; II Chro. 20:21). There is a beauty that is only known in that which is dedicated, set apart, hallowed, consecrated unto the Lord. A woman (or a man, boy, or girl) who is set apart, hallowed, in Christ Jesus as her Savior, and who is living a life devoted, consecrated, dedicated unto the Lord, her Savior is a beautiful sight. It is of great price in the sight of God!

Let us ask this question; are we trying to please men or please the Lord? **"For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ"** (Gal. 1:10). Whose servant are we? If Christ's, then ought we not to be worried about what we are in His sight?

The ministry in the sight of God: Three times in the second epistle to the Corinthian church, Paul uses the phrase **"in the sight of God."**

Honest preaching:
II Corinthians 2:17, **"For we**

are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ." II Corinthians 4:1-2, **"Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."**

In these two places, Paul states that their preaching and teaching of God's Word was done in honesty and sincerity. They did not corrupt the Word of God as others did. They did not preach personal opinions, but preaching the revealed will of God, preaching the conviction of the Holy Spirit. In the sight of God, Paul did not deceive them, he did not leave off anything. To the elders of Ephesus at Miletus he stated, **"Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God"** (Acts 20:26-27) and **"...how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house"** (Acts 20:20). There are many in our day (even those who fly under the Baptist name), who deal deceitfully with their listeners. May it never be said of this church, of this ministry that we ever handle the Word of God with purpose to deceive!

Care for the church:

In II Corinthians 11:28 we are told that Paul had **"...the care of all the churches."** This included the church at Corinth. He had

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Little Hills

(Continued from page 5) ♦

the care of them. He had it for he had preached there. No doubt many had been saved and even added to the work of the Lord at the preaching of the Lord through the Apostle Paul. Observe what Paul wrote here unto the church at Corinth: **“Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you”** (II Cor. 7:12).

Paul speaks of that first epistle (I Corinthians) when he states, **“... though I wrote unto you...”** In I Corinthians, Paul wrote some things that were hard to take. He stepped on toes. He states that he did not have in mind the one who had committed the wrong and was in need of discipline, nor did he have in mind the one that had been wronged. He desired that the church at Corinth might see the care that he had for them. The care Paul had for them in the sight of God. The Lord Jesus was well aware of the care that Paul had for the Corinthian church. Paul reproved them, corrected them, and instructed them so that the whole church might be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (II Tim. 3:16-17). He played the part of the father who had espoused them as a chaste and virgin bride unto her husband and he was correcting their lewd behavior (II Cor. 11:2). Does not the Bible say **“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth”** (Heb. 12:6)? Paul’s words were written out of love and care. God saw the love and care of Paul for His church at Corinth. Now, through

the correcting words of the epistle they, too, could see the care of which Paul had for them.

Our youngest son, Jamison, has a liking for outlets and anything that will fit in them. He is chastened many times. The chastening is not pleasant to parent or child. Jamison cries; backs away from us, but it is done because we love and care for him. If we let him continuously put things in an outlet, it would evidence that we did not care about him.

So, too, do Pastors, Bible-teachers, ministers of God when they preach God’s Word and toes are stepped upon. It is a sign of care. There are those who love to have smooth words preached to them. God help us from being one of those listeners. Spurgeon stated: “We must all learn to hear what we do not like. The question is not, ‘Is it pleasant?’ but, ‘Is it true?’”

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Truly, God sees not as man sees, for He looks upon the heart. The need of the hour and the day is that you and I would look upon things as God does. Oh, for grace that we might be able to see as the Lord sees. We can! By faith, by believing God’s Word we shall see as God sees!



The Priesthood of

(Continued from page 4) ♦

fact the believer in many ways is after the similitude of Christ’s priesthood. He is no successor to Him. No man is a successor to Him, but you as a believer are **“a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous**

light” (I Peter 2:9).

If you are a believer in Christ, if your faith looks not to itself but to the efficacious and vicarious offering of your great eternal high priest then go to Him. **“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”** (Heb. 4:14-16). As our Great High Priest, Christ is praying and mediating for us now. He is a merciful High Priest. When we are in need, we are comforted by His uninterrupted intercession. When we sin, His intercession for us is a great incentive to repent right away.

May God Bless!



Love from on High

(Continued from page 1) ♦

“love from on High.”

Let us consider some aspects of our love for God, which set apart this love, and which make this love different from any other love that is experienced in the hearts and minds of mere mortal beings.

TRUER

First, today, I want you to know that the love that you have for God – the love that was granted unto you from God in Heaven, is a higher and better love than any mere mortal love. The love that you have for God is “agape,” not “eros.” “Agape” is a heavenly love; “eros” is a physical love. In contrast with the normal and widely experienced loves that

men, women, and children feel for each other, our love for God is a spiritual love. Now, I am not saying that love as it is known and felt amongst men, women, and children is a bad thing; nor am I seeking to disallow or invalidate any love that natural man may experience in this world. But, I am saying, that any of these loves that natural men, women, and children may experience do not extend into the spiritual realm, nor can these mortal loves extend into eternity future. Sure, these mortal loves can be admirable, and even ought to be encouraged, when these loves are rightly experienced. And, I also believe that these loves are the product of the effect that God’s goodness and God’s kindness has on the race of mankind. But, these human loves are not to be compared with the love that men have for God!

Our love for God is selfless. Our love for Him is spawned in the love that God has for His people. Such a love led Jesus Christ to lay down His life for our sakes. Should not our love for Him also be selfless?

Our love for God is a love that cannot be swayed. A love that cannot be thwarted. A love that cannot be denied – nor would any who have experienced this love, ever desire to deny that love. Men and women may be forced, under threat or torture, to outwardly deny God; but, none would ever be able to deny their love for Him in their hearts. This love is true.

Further, this love that we have for God is a love that begins in the heart of God, and is enjoined with the hearts of those elect unto salvation. Such a love cannot be imitated, nor experienced by those who only have a pretense of religion. Men may make a show of loving God. They may even

♦ (Continued on page 7)

Love from on High

(Continued from page 6) ♦

make an open demonstration of their love for God. And yet, if that love did not come first from the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, than that love is a fake, a fraud, and a blasphemous lie.

This true love will be our benchmark and our guide.

Honesty and openness is sadly lacking in our society. True love of God, and true love for God is something that we should highly value, and something that we should propagate in this wicked, lying, deceitful, and depraved generation that we live in.

MORE SINCERE

A love in the spiritual sense, which takes into account the Creator and the Redeemer of mankind, must be a love that inspires genuine love, humility, and sincerity of devotion. **“And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace”** (Luke 1:76-79).

Not a fraud. Genuine. Not a pretense. Not occasional, but always present, and always evident.

This love cannot (or ought not) be feigned.

“And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor. And

they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly: Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no? But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me” (Luke 20:20-23)?

There are many who seem to want to make an attempt at being a Christian. There are many who seem to want to play at serving the Lord.

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not” (II Peter 2:1-3).

“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is

to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister” (Heb. 6:4-10).

This is not the attitude of those who have experienced the agape love that comes from the Father in Heaven! This is not the attitude of those who have felt the love of God through the person and the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf!

“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (I Peter 1:22-23).

There is no pretense at religion in our lives. Instead, a genuine desire to serve persists. There is no pretense at love in our hearts. Instead, a sincere love for God permeates our inner man. This leads me to my next observation.

DEEPER

The love that we have for God, is a deeper love than others may know. Sure, men have deep love one for another. The love of spouses; the love of parents for their children; the love of children for their parents. The familial love that family members have for each other. These can all be deep and abiding loves – though, many times, in our day and age, it seems that even this type of love is sadly lacking. And yet, the love that we have for God – the love that emanates from the heart of God – is a love that is far deeper, and

far more effectual than any other love that can be experienced by men. This love that we have for God affects the innermost parts of a man. This love can penetrate to the deepest and furthest reaches of our very existence.

Is it any wonder that this love that we have for God is such a deep and powerful love? After all, we are speaking of a love from God that spans the distance from Heaven to Earth. Such a love, when shared with mortal men, must have some terrific effect upon the hearts and minds of those who experience it.

This love for God will rule in our lives.

Govern our behavior.

Influence every decision we make.

LONGER

Lasting from the moment it is imparted, even into eternity.

A love that was known to God in eternity past, must have an enduring and everlasting effect on the children of God, upon whom that love is bestowed. Our love for God, then, will be a love that has its beginning in God's person and will, and it will endure in our hearts and lives into eternity – never ending, never diminishing, never ceasing to rule in our lives.



The Kind of Faith

(Continued from page 1) ♦

four aspects of Abraham's faith, that we also need today.

1. FIRST, WE WANT TO NOTICE - FAITH THAT BELIEVES GOD CAN RAISE THE DEAD (VERSES 17, 24-25).

This is an absolutely essential element of true saving faith. If we do not believe that God can raise from the dead, then we are still

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The Kind of Faith

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lost in our sins.

We must believe that Jesus was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification (v. 25). In other words, we must believe that Jesus died on the cross as the sacrifice for our sins, and that He was raised again the third day for our justification, and for the forgiveness of our sins. This is the heart of the gospel message, and the foundation of our faith.

We must also believe that Jesus has raised us up spiritually in regeneration and by faith in the gospel. We who believe in Jesus are new creatures in Christ, and have been passed from death unto life. Old things are passed away, and all things are become new.

We must also believe that Jesus shall raise our mortal bodies, and change them and fashion them like unto His glorious body. Beloved, the resurrection is our hope. This is our expectation. This is what we wait for and long for, to be clothed upon with that body that the Lord has prepared for us.

And so, we need the kind of hope that believed in the resurrection.

2. SECONDLY, WE WANT TO NOTICE - FAITH THAT BELIEVES IN THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD (VERSE 17).

Beloved, we need the kind of faith that believes that God is sovereign. Do we believe this morning that God is sovereign over time, and over the physical world, and even over the spirit world to do with as He pleases? Do we believe that God is absolutely sovereign over all things, including all the events of providence.

Abraham, the father of the faith, believed in the sovereignty

of God. God calls those things that are not as though they were; whether it be the creation of the universe; or the creation of the Jewish nation through the loins of Abraham; or the re-creation of His people in regeneration; or the restoration of all things at the end of the age.

Beloved, God is sovereign over all the affairs of this world. He has a plan and purpose for this world and for all men. He has revealed His plan to His children in His Word. And He is going to carry out His plan to the very "jot" and "tittle" of His Word. Not one thing shall be changed or altered, or left undone.

The kind of faith that we need today will embrace the sovereignty of God; not only in His control of the whole world, but also in our lives. Beloved, the understanding of God's sovereignty will help us to be strong in faith, and to accept all those difficult things that come our way in life.

3. THIRDLY, WE WANT TO NOTICE - FAITH THAT, AGAINST HOPE, BELIEVES IN HOPE (VERSE 18).

Beloved, God's children today need a faith that against hope, believes in hope. We face so many situations and circumstances in life, for which there is no natural earthly solution or remedy. Without this kind of faith, the burdens and trials of life could be more than we are able to bear.

What is meant by "against hope?"

This means that there is no natural or human solution that could possibly fulfill our hopes. In our text, Abraham's body was dead in terms of fathering children. Likewise, Sarah's womb was dead to conceiving children. By natural means, they could not possibly bring a child into the world. The only way for their

hopes to be fulfilled, was for God to perform a miracle.

What does it mean to "against hope, believe in hope?"

It means to believe in the promises of God in spite of natural limitations. It also means that our only hope is in the supernatural God of Heaven, and not in the natural laws that govern the physical universe.

To believe in hope against hope, the following things must be true:

1) First, God must truly be the God described in His Word. He must be the eternal, all-knowing, all-wise, and all-powerful God. Most of the world does not believe He is. Beloved, the world must be wrong about our God if we are to believe in hope against hope!

2) Secondly, He must have power to perform miracles at will. In the case of Abraham and Sarah, He must be able to cause the dead, barren womb to conceive. If we are to believe in hope against hope, then our God must be a miracle working God.

3) Thirdly, He must be faithful and true to His promises. He must not lie. He must be true to His Word. If we are to believe in hope against hope, then our God must be faithful and true to His promises.

4) Fourthly, we must believe these things to be true about God. We must embrace the attributes of God by faith. We must not doubt God's Person or His power. We must not doubt His faithfulness to His promises, or His ability to keep His Word to His people. Yes beloved, if we will believe in hope against hope, then we must put our full faith and trust in Him.

May God enable us as His children to have the kind of faith that against hope believes in hope. May God help us to believe in His supernatural, miracle working

power.

4. FOURTHLY, WE WANT TO NOTICE - FAITH THAT IS STRONG (VERSE 20).

Beloved, we need a faith that is strong today. Sometimes we feel so weak. Sometimes we feel like our faith is so weak. But perhaps it is at these times that we are the strongest, when we realize that we are weak and feeble, and all of our dependence is in God and not ourselves. We want to notice three things about strong faith.

1) First, strong faith does not stagger at the promises of God. That is, strong faith does not hesitate, waiver, or falter. It is not double minded or wishy-washy. Strong faith is consistent and stable. Strong faith keeps on going forward. It does not stop and sit down, and it certainly does not go backward.

2) Strong faith gives glory to God. Weak faith, or unbelief, does not give glory to God, but rather brings a reproach upon Him. Unbelief causes doubts and fears, and fretting, and murmuring and complaining. But strong faith will praise, and worship, and glorify God throughout the good times and the hard times of our wilderness wanderings.

3) Strong faith is fully persuaded that God is able to fulfill His promises (verse 21). Strong faith does not doubt God's ability to keep His promises to His people. And strong faith does not doubt God's faithfulness to His promises. Strong faith is not a weak, Arminian faith, that believes God somehow has lost, or has forfeited His right and power to carry out His will and purpose in the affairs of men. Yes, strong faith is persuaded that God is sovereign, and is able to fulfill His promises.

May God give us a strong faith

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Small Drops

By Joseph M. Sidders of
Temperance, Michigan

"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God" (Deuteronomy 32:2-3).



Needs and Wants

My wife and I have found that every trip into a store with our three children results in a lesson on "needs and wants." Our oldest tries to work his way around the principles of this life lesson through humor. His theory is that if we are smiling and laughing, chances are greater that he might get what he wants (whether he needs it or not). Our middle child applies the anger approach. I suppose her hope is that we will cave to her emotional outburst, despite a zero-success rate. Our youngest, who is three, usually tries to emulate her sister's anger, but she can not keep it together for very long before she ends up testing her brother's technique of humor.

For the most part, we successfully combat these methods by giving explanations for where our money will be going instead, which is towards our needs. We have all heard the country song that mentions our inability to tow a trailer behind the hearse at our funerals, right? This is based on the Bible verse I Timothy 6:7, **"For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out."** This text speaks more to moderation and generosity than most people might think. God is not telling us to live as hermits, using leaves as toiletries and enjoying the finer cuisines of grasshoppers and honey, as much as He is insisting that we live for others and find our contentment

in the joy we spread.

When we do not distinguish between the things we need and the things we want, we can become dependent on all that we have obtained instead of focusing on the future provisions of the Father. Jesus defines the **"rich man"** in Mark 10:24-25 as someone who has his faith in the things of this world, focusing on the things he can see, rather than in the spiritual comfort God provides for His people every single day! Jesus was not saying that it was a sin to be rich, or even a sin to want nice things. His point was for us to recognize where these blessings come from, and to be generous with what we have been given.

You can be poverty stricken and still have an issue with "needs and wants" without the proper perspective. In Mark 12, Jesus tells us of a poor widow who had the perfect perspective. He describes how those who were rich were casting their **"abundance"** into the collection box, which is to say what they did not need, they would not miss. Though the widow had very little, with little hope of more coming in, she gave all she had.

Our oldest is eleven now and loves to clean gutters for his grandparents to make a little money. When he sees something he wants in a store, he now comes to us seeking our opinion over the purchase. We assure him that it is his money and we discuss his options. It is incredible to see the

wheels turn as his young mind processes the cost of parting with his own money; it is not the funny matter it was when he was trying to spend ours. I have watched this young man pile up his money to the point where he says he has "too much." What a wonder, having such a grasp on contentment that we find ourselves with too much!

Those things that we have, will go on to be someone else's when we leave this world. How much more would we enjoy possessions if we were giving them to someone who desperately needed them rather than letting these things manipulate our hearts?



The Kind of Faith

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today, that we might not stagger at His promises, that we might be fully persuaded that He is able, and that we might give Him all the glory with our lives.

CONCLUSION

The kind of faith that we have been writing about, was imputed to Abraham for righteousness (v. 22). This same kind of faith is also imputed to all true believers for righteousness (v. 23).

Do we have faith that believes in the resurrection of the dead, especially the resurrection of Jesus? Do we have faith in the sovereignty of God? Do we have faith that, against hope, believes in hope?

And do we have strong faith that staggers not at His promises, that is fully persuaded that He is able to keep His promises, and that gives Him all the glory with our lives?

May God help us to have the kind of faith of our father Abraham!



Worship

By Curtis Pugh
(1944 - 2018)

"And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering" (Gen. 4:4).

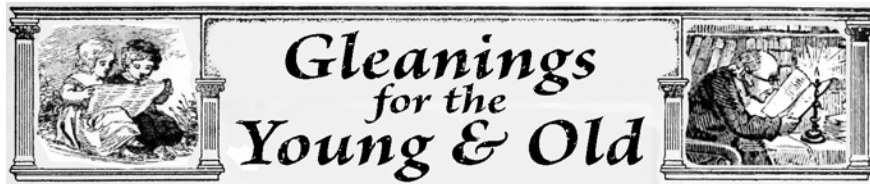


Man is a worshipping creature. From early records of mankind down through the history of our peoples even to modern times men have been seen worshipping. From recorded history we learn that men in early times worshipped certain spirits as well as elements found in nature. Images and carvings, statues and pictures, as well as relics began to be worshipped either along with God or separate and apart from the supposed worship of God.

The record of beginnings, the Bible Book of Genesis, tells how our first parents sinned and lost the blessings and presence of God. A thoughtful reading of the first few chapters of Genesis reveals that while our first parents, Adam and Eve, sinned and hid themselves from God, God came in search of them and even slew certain animals in order to provide a covering for their nakedness. Thus God seeks men today and has provided a sacrifice (the Lord Jesus Christ) whose blood was shed as He was slain on Calvary.

In Genesis chapter 4 we are given the record of the first worship of the two sons of our first parents. Notice these four things: (1) each young man came as an individual to appear before God and to worship; and by the way, each of us stands before God as an individual and each will be judged individually: (2) each young man came to worship

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HONESTY THE BEST POLICY

A gentleman who was one day a passenger on the river Thames, observed on the stern of the boat these words: "Honesty the Best Policy." Taking notice of it, he determined to enter into conversation with the waterman; and inquiring into his situation in life, found that he had a wife and five children, and supported also an old father and mother-in-law by his labor. The gentleman, upon this, was still more desirous to know why he had given such a title to his boat, and asked him the reason of it. In reply the young man spoke as follows.

My father and mother died a few years ago, and left a large family. My father was a waterman, and I was his assistant in the management of a ferry-boat, by which he supported his family. On his death it was necessary (in order to pay his just debts) to sell our boat. I parted from it even with tears, and resolved if possible to purchase it back again. I accordingly went to the person who had bought it, and telling him my design, he engaged that the boat should be mine again whenever I could raise five pounds. My heart bounded at the thought, and I resolved to do my utmost in an honest and fair way to obtain my object.

I was at this time married to a good young woman, and we lived in a small cottage. My father used to say, Always do what is right; labor diligently, manage frugally, trust in God,



and rest assured that He will bless your store. We treasured up these rules, and determined to try the truth of them. I obtained work as a day-laborer, and my wife employed herself in needle-work, spinning, or knitting at home; not a moment of the day was suffered to pass unemployed. We lived sparingly; not a shilling was spent on any improper object; and by these means we were enabled to contribute a little both to the support of religion, and to real objects of charity, and also to lay aside every week a little towards buying the boat.

If our children got a penny at school for a reward, or a present from a neighbor for any little service done, they brought it home and gave it to their mother, saying it would help father to buy the boat. I felt it my duty to teach them, from their infancy, to be obliging, industrious, and careful; recollecting that early habits are most lasting; and when we train up a child in the way he should

go, we have the assurance of God's promise that "**when he is old, he will not depart from it**" (Prov. 22:6).

Thus our little store insensibly increased from time to time, till one pound only was wanting of the sum so much desired; and often my dear wife and I used to remark, that the blessing of Heaven was very observable in the success of our honest endeavors.

But the following accident seemed to disappoint all our hopes. Coming home one evening from my work at a late hour, I saw in the road a small pocket-book, and on opening it I found a bank-note of ten pounds, which plainly enough belonged to my master, for his name was on the book, and I had also seen him passing that way in the evening. It being too late, however, to return to the house, I went on my way. When I told my family of the circumstance, the little ones were thrown into a transport of joy. My dears, said I, what is the matter? O, father,

think how they would all feel supposing it had been our box of money which I had accidentally lost, and which a stranger had found and carried away.

This reasoning had the effect on their young minds which I desired, and I begged it might be a lesson to them never to forget the golden rule, of doing as they would wish others to do to them, and never to turn aside from what God had made their duty.

But to go on with my story: the next morning I put the pocket-book into my bosom, and went to work, intending, as soon as the family arose, to give it to my master; but what were my feelings, when, on searching in my bosom, it was nowhere to be found! I hastened back along the road I came, looking diligently all the way, but in vain—there was no trace of it to be seen. On my return to the garden-gate, I was accosted by the gardener, who told me I was suspected; that our master had lost a pocket-book, describing what

I had found, and that I being the only man absent from the garden at the hour, there was every reason to conclude that I must have got it. Before I could answer, another servant coming up, said I was detected, for that a person had been



the boat!—the boat! we may now have two or three boats! I checked them by my looks, and asked them if they knew whose money that was? They said, yours, father, as you found it. I reminded them that I was not the real owner; and bade them

sent to my house, and that my wife and family had owned it all, and had described the pocket-book.

I told them the real fact, but it seemed to every one unlikely to be true; every circumstance was

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Gleanings for the

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against me, and I was arrested and hurried away to prison. I protested my innocence, but I did not wonder that I gained no credit. Grief now oppressed my heart; my poor wife, my dear children, and my gray-headed parents were all at once plunged into misery; and what was worse, my character was tarnished, and all my ungodly fellow-servants, whose practices I had often condemned, were triumphing, and reviling religion on my account.

My misery seemed almost complete; and under these accumulated sufferings I should certainly have sunk, if the consolation of religion had not borne me up. I knew I was innocent, and these words were a source of unfailing comfort, **“Commit thy way unto the LORD, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass”** (Ps. 37:5) I resolved, having been the cause (though without any design) of the second loss of the property, to offer the whole of our little store to make it good, as far as in my power, and accordingly sent for my wife to give her this sad commission; but, alas! when she came, I found this sacrifice would be of no avail, for, said she, my master has been at the cottage, and I told him freely how you had found the note, but unfortunately had lost it again; and I added, that I was sure my husband and I would make the best return in our power: after which I produced our little box and begged him to accept the contents as all we had to offer; but, she added, that my master angrily refused, saying that our being in possession of all that money was, of itself, the clearest proof of my guilt, for it was

impossible, with my large family, and no greater opportunities than my neighbors, that I could come honestly by such a sum; therefore he was determined to keep me in prison till I should pay the whole.

My distress for the moment was certainly very great, but, conscious of my innocence, I soon recovered my composure, and grew confident that we should not trust in God in vain. And so it happened. One of my fellow-laborers proved to be the person who had picked up the pocket-book after I had dropped it. Having come a few minutes after me along the same road to his work, and hearing that the suspicion had fallen upon me, he was tempted to turn the accident to his own advantage, and conceal the property; which, having kept for a few weeks, till he thought no suspicion would rest upon him, he offered the note for change, and being then suspected, was taken up, and I was released.

The sudden change from so much misery to happiness was almost too much for us. It was the Lord's doing, and it was wonderful in our eyes. My master sent for me, and with many expressions of concern for what had passed, made me give



him an account of the means by which I had collected the little fund that fixed his suspicion

upon me. I accordingly related the history of it as I have now done; and when I came to that part where I checked my children for their inconsiderate joy on my finding the note, he rose with much kindness in his looks, and putting the bank-note into my hand, he said, “Take it, the note shall be theirs; it is the best and only return I can make you, as well as a just reward for your honesty; and it will be a substantial proof to your children of the goodness of your instructions, for they will thus early see and feel the benefit of honesty and virtue.”

This kind and worthy gentleman interested himself much in the purchase of my boat, which in less than a week I had in my possession. I have now the pleasure of being able to help others; for when a rich passenger takes my ferry, as my story is well known in the neighborhood, he often gives me more than my fare, which enables me to let the next poor person go over for half price.

My employment in this way has become also a pleasure. I see the blessing of God on my honest and lawful industry; and when I go home to my family at night with my little earnings, I find it a paradise of domestic enjoyment. My wife, according as our slender circumstances will permit, is always contriving how she can make me happier at home than any where else. My children are waiting to share a father's smile, and tell me all their little tales of what has passed during the day. And my little cottage, though poor, is always neat and clean, and the habitation of peace. Vice and extravagance, sir, are the fruitful parents of misery, but godliness, as the Scripture says,

is **“profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come”** (I Tim. 4:8).

The gentleman was extremely pleased with the waterman's story, and was very desirous of knowing what became of the unfortunate fellow-laborer who had so dreadfully gone aside from the principles of honesty. He learned that he was, after a short imprisonment, set at liberty at the earnest request of the honest waterman; that the thought of what he had done, together with the generosity and religious conduct of the waterman, had so strong an effect on him, that he afterward had this written on his cottage door, Do as you would be done unto. And in dependence on Divine aid, he has resolved to follow this rule himself in future, and to impress it with care upon his children.

Surely, then, those who have lived long, and seen much of life, and enjoyed the advantages of religious instruction, should never depart from this simple and certain rule. It is the sum of the second table of the law; and the man who does not act under its influence, shows too plainly that he has never been changed by the renewing of his mind; for the Holy Scriptures teach us, very clearly, that man is, by nature, **“dead in trespasses and sins”** (Eph. 2:1); but when he becomes a new man, and is **“created in Christ Jesus unto good works”** (Eph. 2:10), the dispositions and affections of his mind are quite altered; his practice is reformed; and his devout, regular, and honest conduct are the most certain evidences which we can have that he is a true Christian.



The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. Could you please explain Psalm 66:18, **"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me?"** -Indiana

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If we have unrepented sin in our lives, we fall into the category of "regarding iniquity" or "esteeming sin as valuable." Sound harsh? Well, what are we doing with that sin in our lives? Why are we keeping it, unless it is because we "want" to... we "value" it too much to repent of it, and discontinue it. The Bible is very clear that God hates sin and does not "regard iniquity." **"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity..."** (Hab. 1:13). Selah! Think about it!

In fact, if we carry this thought to its ultimate conclusion, we will reach Hell. God will eventually (in His time) thrust every unclean thing into an eternal separation from His holy person. **"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death"** (Rev. 21:8). The only way that any of us, as children of God can attain unto His holy presence is for ALL of our iniquity to be purged, atoned, and reconciled unto the perfection of His Holy Son, Jesus Christ.

Do you know the ONLY time that Christ Jesus experienced our

text verse? **"...the LORD will not hear me?"** Yes, it was there at Calvary, during those three hours of darkness, when **"...he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"** (II Cor. 5:21). Listen to the words of our Innocent Substitute, as the heavens became as brass to Him and the holy communion of the Father was hijacked because of His assumption of the sins of His people. **"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me"** (Matt. 27:45-46). Forsaken for those infinite three hours of darkness! Christ regarded the iniquity of my heart as a culpable debt that could only be paid by the death/Hell/separation of His spirit from the triune godhead. And our text verse is fulfilled by this word **"forsaken."** Echoing throughout eternity are the words **"the Lord will not hear me."** Selah! How awful to think about!

But our holy God has prerequisites for communion and "acceptable prayers." How can we consider ourselves "worthy" of answered prayers? Maybe we have not considered what a patronizing act it is for God to answer any human being's prayer? Why should God answer Adam's prayer after Adam rebelled against the Creator's authority? Why should God hear the groanings of a people given to idolatry and

humanism (Ex.2:24)? What kind of religion would obligate a sovereign God to offer pardon and mercy to those seeking their own profit (Rom. 3:10-18)? God's love is first of all reserved for righteousness and holiness. If we reject those premises, what basis can we have a conversation, much less communion or a relationship, with Him? **"Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof"** (Prov. 1:28-30). God will not hear us, until we come to Him the right way. Selah! Think about it!

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation" (Ps. 24:3-5). **"The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them"** (Ps. 145:18-19). If we "regard" or esteem sin, how can (not just will) the Lord hear us? Repent, beloved reader. Repent of those "regarded sins" in our hearts. **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"** (I John 1:9). That is a prayer that He will hear. **"The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the**

LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Ps. 34:15-18). Selah! Let our hearts be contrite!

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"Iniquity" defined: 1) gross injustice or wickedness. 2) A violation of right or duty; wicked act; sin. The literal translation is "lawlessness," which of course is sin.

We are right with God when there is a repentant heart, and God answers our prayers. We should especially tell those that fear God what He hath done for our souls, and how He has heard and answered our prayers, inviting them to join us in prayer and praise; this will be to our mutual comfort, and to the glory of God.

We cannot share these spiritual privileges if we retain the love of **"iniquity"** (sin) in our hearts, though we refrain from the gross practice. If one who professes godliness regards **"iniquity"** as a man regards a welcome visitor; if he gladly admits it in the thoughts and of his heart, taking pleasure in it, and is reluctant to part with it, it is hypocrisy; the Lord hears not the prayers of the wicked. **"The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous"** (Prov. 15:29).

Though it be but a heart-sin that is thus tolerated and made much of, if we delight in it after

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. The early church met in members' houses and outdoors, so, when did churches start meeting in "church buildings?" -Mississippi

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It is true that the early churches often met in members' homes as was the case of the church that met in the home of Priscilla and Aquila (I Cor. 16:19). It appears that the church of Thyatira met in the house of the newly converted Lydia (Acts 16:13-15). The church at Jerusalem assembled in the Outer Court of the Temple (Acts 2:46-47; 5:20, 21, 25, 42). Peter preached his famous sermon on the Day of Pentecost in the Temple precincts and 3000 souls were saved and added to the church of Jerusalem, which was already in existence. Paul often ministered and taught in the various synagogues where local churches gathered for worship (Acts 17:1-4; 19:8-10).

Because Christianity was so reviled by the heathen world, it was difficult for believers to meet in public for worship without molestation or persecution. They would often assemble in secluded places in the woods, in caves, and catacombs. It was also very difficult for Christians to obtain public property with a clear deed of purchase.

Historians agree that the first public building set aside for Christian worship where believers assembled was used between 233 and 256 AD. As Christianity

became more accepted by the pagan world, public buildings set aside for believers to worship in became more commonplace. As the Catholic Church became more and more centralized and wealthier, their buildings were built larger and more ornate.

The Lord's true churches that never identified with the Roman church continued to meet in homes, open spaces, woods, caves, etc. Their assemblies were often small and poor. They were often persecuted by heathen authorities, the Roman Catholic Church, and later Protestant churches that came from the unholy womb of the Mother of Harlots.

As Baptists grew in influence and numbers they began to build meeting houses to worship in. They were usually small and modest buildings that were functional rather than expensive and ornate. Generally speaking, Baptists through the centuries have emphasized the work of missions in communities of all sizes. In cities with large populations Baptists began to build larger buildings to accommodate larger memberships. In smaller communities, modest buildings were built according to the size of the congregation.

I have never advocated the idea of churches going into massive debt to build large and ornate buildings that are only used on Sundays and Wednesdays. Some may call me a little thinker and a big stinker, but I would rather have a modest, functional building that is debt free than one that requires huge monthly payments

over several years. Debt places a huge burden on congregations and often becomes the main focus of the ministry. The size, cost, and design of a building is of very little consequence in the grand scheme of things. Far more important is the saved congregation of baptized believers who meet together to worship the Lord and to carry out the Great Commission. I thank God for the modest building that houses the congregation of the Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church. It is debt free, and it meets the need of our congregation.

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"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42).

I have no idea when churches started meeting in church buildings. But by the above Scripture the early Christian would still have met in the temples for prayer and the breaking of bread. **"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:46-47).**

The only thing that I can say after some research is that the early Christians were so persecuted that to have an

actual church building would have basically been suicide. If there was a certain building they would have met in, then that would have been easy pickings for the Roman soldiers.

If my understanding is correct, it would not have been well after the Dark Ages 500-1500 A.D., the most dark and bloody and awful time for the Christian Baptists. Of course the Catholics would have had their elaborate Cathedrals! The first one was built and finished in 301-303 A.D., other than that I do not know when Baptists started meeting in buildings.

The Trail of Blood by J.M. Carrol may help when Christian Baptist church buildings were erected. It was not until the 1700-1800's that Baptist persecution started to decrease.

This is my opinion, Baptists in many ways have become so passive, and therefore are not persecuted as they once were. Oh we have the truth, and preach it from the pulpit, and have our little Bible Conferences, but if we really fought like our ancestors did, we would have a very difficult time today. What do you think the mainstream media and our government would do if we really spoke out against abortion, and sodomy? We can write a book or article, but who reads it other than a Baptist. What would they do if they really knew what we believed and practiced?

Not that the question asked is not a good one. But let me put a question to you, dear reader, that was put before me because of me being a missionary. "Are we in the business of building churches or buildings?" God Bless!

ROGER REED

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Forum #1

(Continued from page 12) ♦

the inward man, God will not hear our prayer, will not accept it, or be pleased with it, nor can we expect an answer of peace to it.

"Iniquity," regarded in the heart, will certainly spoil the comfort and success of prayer; for the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. They that continue in love and league with sin, have no interest either in the promise or in the Mediator, therefore cannot expect to receive an answer to their prayer. But if the feeling of sin in the heart causes uneasiness, and desire to be rid of it; if it be the presence of an intruder, one urging a demand we know we must not, cannot comply with, this is an argument of sincerity. And when we pray in simplicity and godly sincerity, our prayers will be answered.

I believe God is not taken serious enough, and people believe in an all loving God and He will bend to the will of man, but those who believe such are very foolish and are infidels. I hear the same cry all the time, "God would not do that!" But He did and He will continue to do so!

God was so upset with Israel that He told Jeremiah twice not to pray for them. **"Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee"** (Jer. 7:16). **"Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble"** (Jer. 11:14).

Imagine, not only would God not hear Israel's cries, but God would not even hear Jeremiah if he prayed for them. I believe that same thing for America today. I

no longer pray for America, but what I do pray for is that God would bring His elect people to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. God Bless!

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In this Psalm David is found exalting God and praising Him for all His wondrous works. He is urging the Lord's people to acknowledge the great works of God and to honor Him with worship that is acceptable in their thoughts, words, deeds, and prayers. Certainly this should be the aim of all of God's children to acknowledge, honor, and praise the Almighty for who He is and what He has done.

Psalm 66:18 sets forth a very reasonable principle in light of the holiness of God. We cannot expect God to hear prayers and accept worship that is offered with willful iniquity and the harboring of secret sin in our hearts. Part of acceptable prayer is the open, honest, and transparent confession of sin. If we would only meditate as we begin to pray how foolish it is to think that we can hide any iniquity or sin from God, we would certainly be more open in our confession of sin. God already sees it and knows all about it. It is far better to follow the example of the Psalmist: **"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"** (Psalm 139:23-24). If this is

our attitude and desire we can be sure that the Lord will gladly hear our prayers. However, if we are so proud and arrogant to assume that we can enter into the throne of grace deceptively and dishonestly we should not expect a hearing ear from the Almighty. The Psalmist is simply acknowledging what he knew by way of experience. Perhaps he is reflecting upon the days in which he tried to hide and cover up his sin with Bathsheba. He experienced first hand God's refusal to hear his prayers until He was open and honest in his confession. Psalm 32:3-7 details how he felt: **"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah."**

This verse does not imply that there are certain things which God cannot hear. His Omniscience demands that He sees, hears, and knows all things at once. Proverbs 15:3 states: **"The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."** **"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with**

whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). Rather, the idea is that God will not receive or act upon prayers that are offered by those willfully harboring iniquity and secret sin in their hearts. The Prophet Isaiah offered a similar admonition: **"Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defused with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness"** (Isa. 59:1-3). Jeremiah 5:25 declares: **"Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you."** Jesus taught the same principle in Matthew 5:23-24: **"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."** James also indicated that prayers offered amiss would be rejected: **"Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts"** (James 4:2-3). In light of all these scriptural admonitions and warnings regarding how prayer is to be offered, how solemn should be our reflections upon this sacred exercise!

May God help us to enter into the secret place of the Most High

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Forum #1

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with reverence and godly fear. Oh, that we would understand the awful defilements of our carnal nature by confessing and forsaking our sins as we enter into the most holy place. May we also meditate deeply upon the sovereign grace of God that has lifted us out of the miry pit and has enabled us to enter into heavenly places! May we learn to delight and rejoice in His presence as we speak to Him with an honest, open, worshipful heart!

I love the comment on Psalm 66:18 offered by C.H. Spurgeon:

"If I regard iniquity in my heart" If, having seen it to be there, I continue to gaze upon it without aversion; If I cherish it, have a side glance of love toward it, excuse it, and palliate it; 'The LORD will not hear me.' How can He? Can I desire Him to connive at my sin, and accept me while I willfully cling to any evil way? Nothing hinders prayer like iniquity harbored in the breast: as with Cain, so with us, sin lieth at the door, and blocks the passage. If thou listen to the devil, God will not listen to thee. If thou refusest to hear God's commands He will surely refuse to hear thy prayers. An imperfect petition God will hear for Christ's sake, but not one which is willfully mis-written by a traitor's hand. For God to accept our devotions, while we are delighting in sin, would be to make Himself the God of hypocrites, which is a fitter name for Satan than for the Holy One of Israel" (The Treasury of David, Volume 2, page 114).

TOM ROSS

Forum #2

(Continued from page 14) ♦

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The simplest definition of a Baptist church is found in the Greek word that Jesus Christ chose to use in Matthew 16:18, **"...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."** "Ekklesia," transliterated here as church in our English Bible, means "a local, visible, called-out assembly." William Tyndale translated it primarily as "congregation," as those that are "called-out to worship and conduct business under the direct authority of the head of this spiritual body, Jesus Christ." Selah! Think about it!

Whether it be a private home, or a public sanctuary, the church is NOT the building, but rather the people officially gathering together in obedience to God's command to worship Him. **"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"** (Heb. 10:25). So, after the "church/congregation" departs, the empty living room, or sanctified collection of pews no longer maintains the name "church" in a very important semantic understanding. The "Big Creek Baptist Church" has left the room.

With that established, "when did the churches start meeting in church buildings?" As early

as Acts 3:1, **"Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour."** Here we find members of the church coming **"together"** for the purpose of prayer, at a scheduled time. Inherent is the possibility of the other members of the church heading to this same location, at the same hour, for the same purpose. The temple would be a very likely "church building" for the early church to meet and worship in. Spacious and centrally located, it was probably the most common "meeting house" for the first Baptist church of Jerusalem. Certainly they could schedule meetings wherever they chose; sometimes outdoors, or because of persecution, sometimes at John Mark's house (Acts 12:12). But, it seems that commonly, they would meet in large numbers, in the capacity of church business at the temple. But, the purpose of God was not for "mega-churches," that typically are out of touch with the members, so He scattered them (by persecution) and many Baptist churches sprang up all around the Mediterranean shores and beyond.

The Corinthian Baptist church met in a public sanctuary, differentiated from the members' homes, as we see in I Corinthians 11:20-22, **"When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise**

you not." Paul admonishes them to eat "their" suppers at "their" homes, but to soberly take the "Lord's Supper" at the specially dedicated and set-apart "Lord's house/church of God." This is a passage that might confuse many "universal church" proponents, but clearly the apostle demonstrably inquires whether they despised the "church of God," which references both the ekklesia/body and the sanctuary they were congregating within. Paul is saying, "Eat your dinner at home, and when you get to church, unite soberly with tenderness toward each other."

The apostle's letter to Timothy also speaks of the house of God, differentiated etymologically from the ekklesia/church in I Timothy 3:15, **"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."** **"...in the house of God"** makes clear reference to the specific behavior of the saints when congregating in a specific place. Again, it could be a member's house, but already the saints were copying the Lord's precedent in separating the temple from the home, by supplying a centrally located public place of worship, that they are calling "the Lord's house." The root word of that coined phrase is "kuriakon" which developed into the German "kirche," then into the Scottish "kirk" and the well-known Middle English "churche." By the time the King James Bible was translated, the word was ensconced in the language, and by common usage, no difficulty was seen in transliterating the Greek word "ekklesia" into the

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Forum #2

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familiar English word "church." Obviously, there is a difference between the sanctuary and the church body, but it was tacit and known by all members what Paul was telling Timothy about **"the house of God, which is the church of the living God."** The house is there, but a church is not a church, until it assembles, and so goes the explicit promise of Christ in Matthew 18:18, 20, **"...Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. ...For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."** The phrase **"in my name"** is in reference to authority and a church capacity gathering (open in the name of the law!), not any private gathering of any of God's unconnected saints.

"And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house" (Acts 20:20). The Ephesus church that Paul was addressing also had a public place to worship, that was contrasted with the "private" instruction (Bible studies) that the apostle was able to also offer during his extended stays with the church.

Modern vernacular is perhaps not so very "modern" after all. It sounds like the apostles of old would say with David of even more ancient times: "Let us go to church." **"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD"** (Ps. 122:1). Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP

Worship

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the one true God: (3) each must have had previous knowledge from his parents that God required a blood sacrifice: and (4) while Abel himself was accepted and therefore his sacrifice was also accepted, Cain himself was not accepted and neither was his sacrifice.

Do not make the common mistake of thinking that it was the offering of each one that determined either his acceptance or rejection. This was not a matter of works. The plain teaching of Scripture is that one was accepted (and his offering) and one was rejected (and his offering). This was a matter of individual, personal election on the part of a sovereign God! While it is true that Abel, the elect brother, brought the required sacrifice and that Cain, his non-elect brother, brought a bloodless sacrifice of his own providing, let us ever be mindful that it is out of the heart of man that his words and actions spring. Let us keep the horse before the cart and not vice versa. Abel brought the proper sacrifice because God had worked in his heart and caused him to believe the truth and to want to follow after God. Cain refused to bring the proper sacrifice because God had left him alone and he followed his own prideful ideas. This is ever the case. Man is a sinful, rebellious creature who, when left alone, brings forth fruits according to his nature. Man sins because he is a sinner. Man seeks to worship God in Spirit and in truth only when God has worked a work of grace in the individual.

Cain was rejected. His sin was not the sin of worshipping false gods, but his sin was the false worship of the true and living God. At this very early time in man's history no false gods were yet worshipped. The worship of other gods, elements of nature, spirits, etc., that has come

down to us today had its origin with a man named Nimrod who lived much later than Cain and Abel. Nimrod is mentioned in Genesis 10:8-10. By the way, the same things that were involved in Nimrod's worship are involved in the worship of false gods today, such as the worship of a woman who had a miracle baby, an evergreen tree, eggs as a fertility symbol, a woman riding on the back of a turtle, etc.

Many very religious people of our own day are guilty of the false worship of the true God. These are sometimes good folk who have had no personal encounter with the Son of God. Their pitiful attempt at "religion" is dead and dry, boring and uninteresting. Because they have only experienced false worship, many of these so-called Christians find mowing the lawn, sleeping late, or indulging in some other self gratifying activity of more importance than obeying God and being faithful to the meetings of a true Church. Or perhaps watching some fake money-grabbing "preacher" on TV is better suited to their taste for flesh tickling entertainment than going to the meeting house of the Lord's Church to hear the Word of God preached and to worship the true and living God.

The Bible foretold such things in II Timothy chapter 3 where it is stated, **"...that in the last days. . . men would be ...having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. . ."** The outward form is present at many religious gatherings - in fact it seems that the farther men are from God and the truth the more attention they pay to outward forms, rites and rituals. How sad it is that the vital, living, powerful working of God in His people through the Holy Spirit is sadly and noticeably absent from such religious gatherings. Such is the false worship of the true God.

Some today are not guilty of the false worship of the true God, but are guilty of the worship of false Gods. The Bible says that covetousness (the desire for things belonging to another person) is idolatry (Col. 3:5). Many persons of affluence and many who would like to be rich fall into the sin of worshipping money and things - what the Bible calls **"mammon"** (Matt. 6:24).

Similarly, to worship and honour spirits, wind, water, the sun, the moon, "mother Earth," animals and elements of nature, etc., and to pray to these created things rather than worshipping the Creator is worship of false gods. God hates such idolatry and those who do not repent of such false notions and actions will suffer the terrible torments of eternal fire (I Cor. 6:9; Rev. 21:8).

King David wrote in Psalm 135:5, **"For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods."** God alone is to be worshipped. He seeks worshippers who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). Any worship having its beginnings other than in the sacrifice God Himself provided is false worship regardless of where and when it began. Such worship of false gods may display power and cause many to fear, but the power of such is not the power of God.

Turn from all worship that is not worship of the Ancient of Days. Worship other than the truly ancient worship of God is an invention of man and is condemned by God. Repent of all the inventions of men and return to the Ancient Worship of God Who has revealed Himself to mankind from the beginning of man's history. Seek salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ Who said, **"...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"** (John 14:6).





From the Pen of a Country Preacher

Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)



The Virgin Birth

It is the universal belief of the Christian church that Jesus Christ was born without a human father, being conceived supernaturally by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary. The churches have believed this because the Son of God was so conceived and so born. Religious infidels in multitudes of theological schools deny this doctrine, but God's Word, settled for ever in Heaven, is still true.

"And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me" (Luke 1:43)?

Three false doctrines have grown out of the Biblical teaching about the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. I want to briefly discuss these.

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Roman Catholic dogma holds the soul of the virgin Mary was conceived free of original sin by divine grace. On December 8, they observe a festival in commemoration of the supposed immaculate conception. If immaculate conception is a Bible doctrine, then the regeneration of the human race began with Mary instead of Christ.

This is Catholic foolishness and pure human tradition. It is in direct conflict with the teachings of God's Word. Mary herself testified that she was a sinner and rejoiced to know that Christ was her Savior. She declared: **"And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour"** (Luke 1:47). If she needed a Savior, then she was a sinner like all other women who

ever lived. Her own statement proves she never dreamed of her immaculate conception, or even her immaculate life.

MARY NOT MOTHER OF GOD

The same people who teach immaculate conception also speak often of Mary as the mother of God. Mary was the mother of the Lord only in the sense she gave birth to Him. But Mary, a mere mortal, was not in the absolute sense the mother of God. The eternal God has no mother. Such dogma is an insult to the Divine Being.

If Christ's humanity came from His mother, then it would have been sinful. The cells of Christ's body came from the sinless Holy Spirit. **"And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God"** (Luke 1:35).

The body of Jesus was created by the energy of the Godhead conveyed by the Holy Spirit. This extraordinary life of which Mary was to be the mother was produced by the direct agency of God. God prepared Him a body by direct creation which was pure and holy (Heb. 10:5). Such a body was necessary to His work of redemption.

MARY'S PERPETUAL VIRGINITY

There are some who content that Mary and Joseph did not cohabit after the birth of Christ. If they did not do this, then they violated the law of Moses (Ex. 21:10) and the teaching of the New Testament (I Cor. 7:2-5). This would be highly unusual and very doubtful. It is only logical to assume that after the birth of Christ, Mary and Joseph did cohabit.

Matthew seems to indicate that they did. He says of Joseph: **"And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS"** (Matt. 1:25). The natural suggestion of the language implies that Mary afterward bore other children. The term, **"firstborn son"** is applied to Christ in Luke 2:7, indicating Mary and Joseph had other sons. The overwhelming probability is that they did honor the institution of marriage as other Jewish couples did in those days. There is nothing in this that dishonors Christ.

Matthew 13:55-56 seems to forever settle this question. His enemies asked: **"Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us?"** The plain style used by Matthew can mean nothing less than these were the sons and daughters of Joseph and Mary after the birth of Christ.

GENESIS 3:15

The very first promise of a Savior implied His virgin birth. In Genesis 3:15 He is called "the Seed of the woman," not the seed of man and woman. All the sons of Adam are the seed of the man and woman, but the great Deliverer came only through the woman.

Jeremiah seems to bring this truth to light also. By inspiration

he wrote: **"For the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man"** (Jer. 31:22). The Apostle Paul likewise lays stress upon this when he said that Christ was **"made of a woman"** (Gal. 4:4). The apostle makes no reference to a man being involved in Christ's conception.

ISAIAH 7:14

The most important passage on the virgin birth of Christ in the Old Testament is found in Isaiah 7:14. The prophet told Ahaz to ask for a sign from the Lord in order to confirm the word the prophet had spoken. Fearful to ask for a sign lest it should not come to pass, Ahaz refused this sign. Isaiah then addressed the house of David and gave them a sign of such a character that men would believe it impossible to come to pass. **"Therefore the LORD himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"** (Isa. 7:14).

Only unbelief would try to nullify the force of this passage by reading in the place of **"virgin"** a "young woman." The meaning is easily ascertained: An unmarried virgin would become a mother and bring forth a child named **"God with us."**

"Virgin" is a translation of the Hebrew word *almah*. This is one of the words translated **"virgin"** in the Old Testament. The other word is *bethulah*. *Almah* is found 7 times in the Hebrew Old Testament. It is translated 4 times "virgin" (Gen. 24:43; Songs of Solomon 1:3; 6:8; Isa. 7:14), 2 times "maid" (Ex. 2:8; Prov. 30:19), and 1 time "damsel" (Ps. 68:25). *Bethulah* is applied in Joel 1:8 to a young wife, but *almah* is never applied in this manner.

It is true that *almah* can be

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The Virgin Birth

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translated “maiden” or “girl.” *Almah* is the word which describes a potential bride (Gen. 24:43) or an unmarried girl (Ex. 2:8). It certainly does presume a state of virginity and is a term outgrown at marriage. It comes from the root, “to lie hid.” The virgins in the East were closely kept from men’s gazes in their parents custody; hence, it must be used of a pure virgin. Every unmarried girl is presumed to be a virgin, unless evidence proves otherwise.

The translators of the Septuagint rendered *almah* in Isaiah 7:14 by the Greek word which can mean only an unmarried virgin.

The context of Isaiah 7:14 demands the word to be “virgin.” There is a special sign spoken of in it given by Jehovah Himself. The birth of a child by ordinary means is not a sign. But the birth of a child by a virgin called “**God with us**” would certainly be a great sign to the house of David.

The prophet speaks of this virgin born child again in chapter 9:6-7: “**For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father. The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.**”

MATTHEW 1:23

Matthew by divine inspiration quotes Isaiah 7:14 in the New Testament: “**Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled**

which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matt. 1:22-23). In the Greek it reads “the virgin,” referring to the very one mentioned by Isaiah.

“Virgin” in Matthew 1:23 is the Greek word *parthenes*. It is found 14 times in the Greek New Testament, and it is always translated “virgin” in the King James version. The term means unspotted virginity as can be seen from its use in Revelation 14:4: “**These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.**” Paul described the church as “**a chaste virgin**” (II Cor. 11:2).

OTHER PROOF

One must either impeach the integrity of Joseph and Mary or doubt the Divine chronicle of Matthew and Luke, if he rejects the virgin birth. Only a person possessed with the spirit of Antichrist would dare to do either.

Matthew distinctly removes all possibility of Joseph being the human father. He wrote: “**Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost**” (Matt. 1:18). He adds that Joseph “**knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son**” (Matt. 1:25).

Luke describes Mary as “**a virgin**” (Luke 1:27). Mary was troubled about the angel’s announcement concerning the birth of Jesus simply because she was a pure virgin (Luke 1:28-33). “**Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?**” (Luke 1:34). The angel calmed her questions by

telling her it would all take place by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35).

Mary was not a poor little Jewish girl who lived too near a camp of German soldiers as religious liberals claim. Joseph was the only man in her life. She was no fornicator. Instead she was one of the most godly women who ever lived in this world; otherwise, she would not have been chosen to be the mother of Jesus Christ.

THE PURPOSE OF IT

First, Christ must be born of a virgin to fulfill Old Testament prophecy. It was predicted that He would be the Seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). Isaiah foretold He would have a virgin birth (Isa. 7:14). In Matthew 1:23 we have recorded the fulfillment of these two Old Testament prophecies.

Second, Christ must be born of a virgin to be entitled to David’s throne. It may have seemed to some that Jeremiah set up a bar to prevent Christ from being entitled to the crown rights to David’s throne. The prophet wrote: “**Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not? O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah**” (Jer. 22:28-30).

Matthew’s genealogy shows the title to David’s throne must descend through the line of Jeconiah (Coniah is the Hebrew spelling of the Greek word Jeconias). The crown rights descended through the Father, not the mother. This meant

the Messiah must be the son of David without being the seed of Jeconiah.

Joseph was a son of Jeconiah (Matt. 1:1, 11-12, 16). How can Christ establish His right to the Davidic throne and yet not do harm to Jeremiah’s prophecy? The answer is found in the virgin birth which made Christ the legal son of Joseph without His being the seed of Jeconiah (Luke 2:4).

Third, Christ must have been born of a virgin to have been our Savior. All the natural seed of Adam inherited Adam’s guilt and sin. “**For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners**” (Rom. 5:19). In order for man to be redeemed, One must come into our race not descended by natural generation from Adam.

Paul seems to bring this out in writing to the Corinthians: “**And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven**” (I Cor. 15:45-47).

Christ condemned sin in His sinless human flesh (Rom. 8:3). He could not have done this except by His virgin birth by which He escaped the taint of sin common to our race. Jesus Christ frequently went up to the temple, but He never offered sacrifice. He prayed on the cross: “**Father, forgive them**” (Luke 23:34), but He never prayed: “Father, forgive me.” Our Lord told Nicodemus that he needed to be born again, but He Himself had no such need. Jesus Christ never personally experienced sin in His human body, soul, or spirit.

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The Messiah had a human nature, yet He was without original sin or any personal acts of disobedience. The Scriptures give no uncertain sound on this subject. The Savior said: **"The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me"** (John 14:30). He could call upon His critics and ask: **"Which of you convinceth me of sin?"** (John 8:46). His critics could only stand in utter silence.

The Apostle Paul wrote of Christ: **"Who knew no sin"** (II Cor. 5:21). The writer to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus Christ **"was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"** (Heb. 4:15). By His virgin birth our Savior **"is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens"** (Heb. 7:26). The entire life of Christ on earth was **"without spot"** (Heb. 9:14).

Simon Peter declares that our Lord was **"a lamb without blemish and without spot"** (I Pet. 1:19). He later in his first epistle wrote: **"Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth"** (I Pet. 2:22).

CONCLUSION

Higher critics and religious liberals have gone to great lengths to deny the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. The late Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969) said that he did "not believe in the virgin birth or in that old-fashioned doctrine of the atonement and I do not know of any intelligent person who does" (Cited by R. T. Ketcham in *The Answer*, pp. 27-28).

Nels F. S. Ferre published this statement as to his views on the birth of Christ: "Mary, we remember, was found pregnant

before her engagement to mild Joseph. Nazareth was hard by a Roman garrison where the soldiers were German mercenaries. Jesus is also reported throughout a continuous part of the history of art, it is claimed, to have been blond. This is supposedly unnatural for the Mediterranean countries where this same tradition started and was continued. Hence Jesus must have been the child of a German soldier! After all, the claim develops, such is the experience of many girls near military camps" (*The Christian Understanding of God*, p. 191).

Such rank statements of religious infidelity stink to high Heaven! These remarks could come only from what the world calls today "Christian atheists."

To deny the virgin birth of Christ is to say a sinful unmarried pair gave life to the purest human being who ever lived in the world. It is to declare that the man Christ Jesus, Who forgave the sins of others, never knew the shame of His own origin. Such ideas are utterly repulsive to any honest believer in the holy Scriptures.

If we cannot believe what the Bible says about the virgin birth, then we cannot believe anything which it says. If Christ was not born of the virgin Mary, then the Bible is a forgery and all Christians are the biggest fools this side of Hell. We have no Savior and are yet in our sins.

One cannot be saved unless he believes the Biblical record about the virgin birth of the Messiah. **"He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son"** (I John 5:10). All rejecters of this doctrine will suffer eternal torment.



THE BIBLE AND THE NEWSPAPER

Readers of the BBB are urged to submit religious news items which they may read in their local paper or some other publication. In sending these please give the name of the publication as well as the date it was printed. We will not be able to print all which are submitted, but we welcome any item you may feel we should read.

Send them to The Berea Baptist Banner, PO Box 39, Mantachie, MS 38855-0039.

MUSEUM OF THE BIBLE VISITORS TOP HALF A MILLION IN FIRST SIX MONTHS

(CH)---The Museum of the Bible, the newest tourist attraction near the National Mall, has drawn 565,000 visitors since it opened. "We are pleased that more than half a million people have walked through the iconic Gutenberg Gates since last November to experience the largest museum dedicated to the Bible," said Museum of the Bible President Cary Summers. By comparison, other museums have had a smaller draw in their first half-year. More than 1,700 groups have visited the high-tech Museum of the Bible. Officials said visitors travel an average of 260 miles to the 430,000-square-foot museum.

MASSACHUSETTS VOTERS MAY REPEAL TRANSGENDER 'BATHROOM BILL'

(CH)---Transgender rights laws have been controversial across the country, but one of the nation's most liberal states (Massachusetts) could become the first to overturn such protections this fall. A referendum that would repeal the 2016 state law likely will appear on the ballot in November. The law allows men and women to use the restroom or locker room that corresponds to their gender identity. In other words, men who identify as women are allowed to use the women's restroom.

SUPREME COURT MAY TAKE ON CASE OF FLORIST WHO REFUSED TO SERVE GAY

WEDDING

(CH)---The Supreme Court may take on a case this week about whether artists can be forced to provide services for same-sex weddings. Justices meet for a private case to discuss another case involving the rights of artists to provide services based on their religious beliefs. This case involves a dispute between Arlene's Flowers, its owner Barronelle Stutzman, and a gay couple, Robert Ingersoll and Curt Freed. The Washington Supreme Court ruled that Stutzman violated the state civil rights law when she refused to make floral arrangements for Ingersoll and Freed's wedding in 2013. Stutzman appealed the ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court and in July 2017.

"AMERICA IS A CHRISTIAN NATION" BILLBOARD FORCED DOWN AS TOO DIVISIVE

(CH)---The pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas says billboards his congregation sponsored calling America a Christian nation were taken down because the company called them too divisive. The removal also took place after the city's mayor and newspaper criticized them. "We were told by the billboard company that the message was divisive. It should greatly concern people of any faith when those in the press or government proactively seek to defeat, censor or silence any religious message with which they disagree," he said. In the end, another billboard company stepped up and agreed to carry the church's message.

SUPREME COURT CAKE

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DECISION ALIGNS WITH MOST AMERICANS

(CH)---The Supreme Court ruling (7-2) is that Jack Phillips will not be forced, against his conscience, to bake a cake for a same-sex wedding. Some have argued that the Christian baker was only hiding his innate anti-gay bigotry behind a religious facade. But a majority of the American people do not see it that way. When asked whether it should be up to the federal government to determine what constitutes legitimate religious beliefs, only 11 percent agreed and a massive 79 percent disagreed. This is where the Supreme Court came down hardest on the Colorado Civil Rights Commission, for attacking Jack Phillips's religious beliefs as illegitimate. Dr. Frank Wright said "Thus, the fight for religious liberty continues. Today's decision is a victory, to be sure—but a very limited one. The fact that we must wait for future Supreme Court decisions to declare that the First Amendment is still in effect shows that our judicial system is out of control."

CHRISTIAN TEACHER FORCED OUT FOR NOT FOLLOWING HIGH SCHOOL TRANSGENDER POLICY

(CH)---A Christian high school teacher in Indiana says he was forced out because he refused to follow a new policy that requires transgender students be called by their preferred name. School administrators had been allowing teachers to refer to transgender students by their last name. But in February, that policy was rescinded. "They told me to start using the transgender students opposite-sex names and if I was not willing to do that I would be terminated by May 1st. The other option they gave me was to resign so I could get paid over the summer."

DEMOCRATS OPPOSE U.S. ABORTION LAWS, GALLUP POLL SHOWS

(CH)---A recent Gallup poll found that while 60 percent of Americans back legal abortion in the first trimester, support plummets to 28 percent in the second trimester and 13 percent in the third trimester. Even among Democrats, whose party supports legalized abortion, support for legal abortion in the second trimester is only 46 percent and in the third trimester 18 percent. Further, only 45 percent of Americans support legal abortion "for any reason" in the first trimester.

TOWN SAYS YES TO MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES, BUT NO TO CHURCHES

(CH)---A North Carolina church filed a federal lawsuit Monday against the town of Monroe after it prevented the congregation from meeting in a building that previously was used by another church and that has been zoned for use only by museums and libraries and other nonprofits. The lawsuit states that the town "has treated the Church on less than equal terms with similarly-situated nonreligious assemblies and institutions, substantially burdened the Church's free exercise of religion, and infringed on the Church's rights to free speech, peaceable assembly, and equal protection." The suit notes that the church is prohibited from meeting in the building even though the ordinance allows the building to be used for "education, training, or resources of a public, nonprofit, or charitable nature."

NYC MAY ALLOW A 3RD GENDER ON BIRTH CERTIFICATES

(CH)---A new proposal supported by the mayor and city council speaker would allow people who were born in New York City to select a third gender known as "X" on their birth certificate. Already, parents of newborns who don't want a gender on their child's birth certificate can place asterisks in

the gender category until the child is old enough to choose a gender. Newborns whose parents don't want to enter a gender would continue under the current system of being documented with four asterisks as a placeholder until their kids are old enough to choose for themselves. Three states (California, Washington and Oregon) allow people to choose a third gender on their birth certificates.

RECORD SUPPORT FOR GAY RELATIONS AND POLYGAMY; PLURALITY STILL OPPOSE ABORTION

(CH)---A recent Gallup poll showed a record percentage of Americans believe that gay and lesbian relations, pornography and polygamy are morally acceptable, although a plurality believe that abortion is morally wrong. A record 67 percent of American adults believe that gay and lesbian relations are morally acceptable, an increase from last year's high of 63 percent. On other issues, 76 percent say divorce is morally acceptable versus 73 percent in 2017; 43 percent say pornography is morally acceptable versus 36 percent in 2017; 19 percent say polygamy is morally acceptable versus 17 percent in 2017. The seven-point jump in the acceptance of pornography was driven by unmarried people, Gallup's Andrew Dugan wrote. "This year, the percentage of nonmarried individuals who find pornography morally acceptable rose 15 points to 50%," he wrote. "Acceptance of pornography among married individuals, at 35% this year, is essentially no different from last year's 37%. Meanwhile, 67% of men aged 18 to 49 this year say pornography is morally acceptable, a 14-point increase from last year."

OLDEST MANUSCRIPT OF GOSPEL OF MARK DISCOVERED

(CH)---An ancient and much-debated fragment of the Gospel of Mark has been dated to the late second

to early third century A.D., making it the oldest fragment of Mark ever found. The Egypt Exploration Society made the announcement about the fragment on May 24. "After rigorous comparison with other objectively dated texts, the hand of this papyrus is now assigned to the late second to early third century AD. The two sides of the papyrus each preserve brief traces of a passage from Mark," the society said. It was found around 1903 along with many other ancient documents.

JUDGE TEMPORARILY BLOCKS IOWA'S FETAL HEARTBEAT LAW

(CH)---A judge temporarily blocked Iowa's newest abortion restrictions from going into effect until a lawsuit challenging the law's constitutionality can be resolved. Governor Kim Reynolds, a Republican, signed the law on May 4th. It banned abortions after doctors detect a heartbeat, which usually happens around the sixth week of pregnancy. The fetal heartbeat law, which gave Iowa the strongest pro-life legislation in the country, was scheduled to go into effect on July 1st. Reynolds said she signed the law to protect human life. "If death is determined when a heart stops beating, then doesn't a beating heart indicate life? For me, it is immoral to stop an innocent beating heart." The law's critics believe it is unconstitutional and overly restrictive, arguing that the law restricts abortions to a period of time in which some women may not even know they are pregnant.

TELEVANGELIST NEEDS NEW \$54 MILLION JET

(CH)---Televangelist Jesse Duplantis is under scrutiny for asking donors to pay for a new multi-million-dollar jet he says he needs to spread God's Word. He said he feels led by God to purchase a Falcon 7X at a cost of \$54 million to replace his current jet. "You know I've owned three different

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jets in my life and used them and just burning them up for the Lord Jesus Christ," he said. Daniel Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, criticized the plan. "You cannot make this insanity up. This is why the prosperity gospel is no gospel. It is heresy plain and simple."

POPE FRANCIS REPORTEDLY TOLD GAY MAN: 'GOD MADE YOU LIKE THIS'

(CH)---Juan Carlos Cruz said that the Pope told him regarding his identity as a gay man, "You know Juan Carlos, that does not matter. God made you like this. God loves you like this. The Pope loves you like this and you should love yourself and not worry about what people say." This is not the first time the Pope has garnered attention for more lenient views on current issues and controversies in the Church. It also marks a departure from the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church on homosexuality, which is that it is contrary to God's plan. The Vatican has not officially confirmed or denied the Pope's comments to Cruz.

"Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God. And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the LORD which sanctify you. If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them" (Lev. 20:8-9, 13).

MORE CHRISTIANS TODAY BELIEVE EVANGELIZING IS OPTIONAL

(CH)---A new study from the Barna Group has found that Christians are not evangelizing as often as they used to. A revealing change in the statistics between 1993 which 89 percent of Christians who had shared their faith agreed this is a responsibility of every

Christian compared to today, just 64 percent say so; a 25-point drop. As of note, a majority of Christians 25 years ago also reported emphasizing the beneficial aspects of accepting Jesus (78 percent)—a strategy that today is less common (50 percent).

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS CHRISTIAN LAW SCHOOLS CAN'T HOLD CHRISTIAN BELIEFS, CANADIAN SUPREME COURT RULES

(CH)---Canada's Supreme Court dealt a major blow to religious freedom last week, ruling that a Christian university's law school could be denied accreditation because it requires students to affirm and practice biblical sexual ethics. Trinity Western University's law school requires students to follow a Community Covenant, which, in part, says "sexual intimacy is reserved for marriage between one man and one woman." The law societies of British Columbia and Ontario had refused to grant the law school accreditation on the grounds that the covenant prohibits lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students from attending. By a 7-2 margin, the court ruled that the law societies had not violated Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. "In our respectful view, the [law societies] decision not to accredit Trinity Western University's proposed law school represents a proportionate balance between the limitation on the Charter right at issue and the statutory objectives the [law societies] sought to pursue," the court ruled. Alliance Defending Freedom allied attorney Gerald Chipeur said the ruling has major implications. "The Supreme Court of Canada has abandoned the promise of freedom that led to the creation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms 36 years ago. "Individuals will need to turn to their legislators to protect freedom of religion."



END

A Brief Look at Our Baptists

By Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 – 2002)

(Written in February 1992)

When I first came among Sovereign Grace, Landmark, Independent Baptists in 1969, it seemed to me that their whole movement centered around three great pillars based upon a literal interpretation of the Bible: the local church to the exclusion of the universal, invisible church; the doctrines of grace; and premillennialism. To the best of my knowledge, about 95 percent of the brethren at that time stood firmly on these points, although they differed on other points of doctrine. As the years have passed, these three great pillars have cracked and crumbled to some degree.

THE PILLAR OF PREMILLENNIALISM

The first pillar to suffer was premillennialism. Here and there appeared a few mid-tribbers and post-tribbers. Some of these went on to embrace amillennialism, although some continued as they were and remained premillennialists. A very few returned to pre-trib premillennialism.

I would guess that the present situation is about as follows. The vast majority of our preachers are still pre-trib premillennialists, although the post-trib position has gained some strength and the mid-trib has lost a few. It is to be greatly feared that most premillennialists have received their views mostly by tradition from their fathers, and that they in the main do not have any deep-seated convictions based on personal study of the Scriptures. This makes them an easy prey of amillennialists. A growing number

have no stable views on eschatology. They are disgusted with the conflicting views about prophecy, and they seldom study it, preach it, or teach it in their churches. There exists also a growing number of amillennialists who are convinced of their position by personal Bible study. The pillar of premillennialism has not fallen to the ground, but it is tottering.

THE PILLAR OF CHURCH TRUTH

Perhaps no pillar has suffered as much as church truth. It has suffered from the hands of conservatives and liberals. The first to attack the pillar were the conservatives. In the early 1960s a few of our preachers invented the "priesthood of the church" theory. This was a reactionary movement started to help stabilize church truth. These men limited God's priesthood on earth to Baptist churches. Some of these went on to teach that only Baptists have the Holy Spirit and are regenerated, and will be in the first resurrection. A very few taught that there was no sin but a doctrinal sin and that the child of God can commit the unpardonable sin.

And, as is always the case, there was a reaction to this making a god out of the church and its anointed priesthood. Most of the brethren repudiated this new teaching. Some were so upset with the priesthood doctrine that they left our ranks and became immersed Presbyterians. The majority of the priesthood men saw nothing more in their view than new arguments for church authority. A few priesthood men went into hardshellism, or some sort of cult, or gross immorality. While the teaching of an anointed priesthood is on the decline at present, when it appeared it split our ranks and drove some weaker brethren from us into Protestantism.

Church truth in the last few

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A Brief Look at Our

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years has suffered in the house of her friends. Here and there Landmarkers attack Landmarkism. The start of this attack came in the 1960s when one of our preachers wrote a book against Landmarkism. He was disfellowshipped and his book repudiated. We went on for a brief time at peace. Then another brother wrote a book against Landmarkism, charging that water baptism is our golden calf and that most Landmarkers do not have the mental capacity to read. This book was well received by a few Landmark Baptists, but it was rejected by most brethren, as was the first, as heresy. Unlike in the case of the first book, the writer of the second book continued in good grace among a few professed Landmarkers.

In the last few years the idea of a mother church has come under attack from within the ranks of Landmarkers. One of the fundamentals of Landmarkism is that there has been a succession of true churches across the centuries who preserved the ordinances uncorrupted. Any new church organized must derive its authority and church rights from another church in the line of succession. Any church not in this line of succession is not a scriptural church. Now we are being told that this is all wrong, and that it is not at all necessary that one church descend from another church. Furthermore, we are told that any church which had a mother church was organized in an unscriptural fashion. We also are told that a church need not be concerned about its origin, for to do so would be to hold to a "paper-chain" succession. Among those who are propagating these ideas are some brethren whose churches were started out of excluded

members from another true New Testament Baptist church, or, in some cases, their churches sprang out of the ground.

These brethren have raised more questions than they have answered. Consider a few. If there is no Scripture for a mother church, how can churches which have a mother be scriptural churches? Can you have a true church which was started in an unscriptural manner? If how a church is started is not important, then are all so-called Baptist churches scriptural churches? What about the Protestants if there is no need to be in the line of Baptist succession? Can you have a true church without scriptural baptism? If not, where do you get the authority for scriptural baptism if not from another true Baptist church? Can excluded members from a true Baptist church be constituted into a scriptural church? Can there be any scriptural baptism apart from the body of Christ?

There is also a growing problem about the reception of alien immersion among our churches and pulpit affiliation with heretical groups. If you go to a Bible conference do not be surprised if there are Arminians, hardshells, Reformed Baptists, universal church men, or even Protestants on the program. The pillar of church truth is all but ready to fall to the ground. Worse still, most Landmarkers do not know this and some do not care.

THE PILLAR OF THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE

The doctrines of grace have suffered the least of the three in my opinion, but this pillar is now under heavy attack. Some brethren have taken these doctrines to the extreme and ended up in hardshellism. But a great number in our ranks who claim to believe them do not. There is a growing number of Calvinians (an Arminian who wants people

to think he is a Calvinist). A strong sermon on the covenant of grace, or election out of pure grace, would split some Sovereign Grace Baptist churches!

"Gospel regeneration" has been stressed until it has neared the point of the teaching of Free Will Baptists more than Sovereign Grace Baptists. Some even see no difference between the gospel as preached by Arminian Baptists and that preached by Sovereign Grace Baptists. They inconsistently contend that the Arminian gospel is the same as ours, but then throw a fit when it comes to Arminian baptism, although the Bible teaches baptism is a picture of the gospel. Another pillar is tottering.

THE PILLAR OF MORALITY

Sad to say, there is another growing problem which I never expected to see. I refer to the moral declension in our churches. I continue to be appalled at the growing open sin of adultery among some preachers and deacons in our ranks! Preachers I considered strong in the faith have left the wife of their youth for a whore. Our churches are filled with people who have broken homes. Most preachers are silent about this problem, lest they offend some good-paying members.

I am utterly astonished to see that some see no evil in a preacher living with a number of women as wives who are not his wives. If any one dares to raise questions about this he is branded a trouble-maker who seeks to destroy the ministry of our best preachers. The words in the Bible about adultery and lying means nothing to some preachers and their churches.

Verily, if we cannot agree that lying and adultery are sins, then it stands to reason we cannot agree on anything, and that we are hopelessly divided. It is now no longer doctrinal issues which divide us; it is moral issues as well. Unless these

moral problems are checked we are doomed to death and destruction. God will not bless a people who try to justify the sins of lying and adultery.

None of the facts that I have called attention to in our ranks are pleasing to me. The knowledge of these things is very grievous to this writer. How he would like to see unity on the three great pillars once again, but he does not expect to see it. Instead, I expect the apostasy to gain strength in the next few years. God is slowly but surely removing our leaders. T. P. Simmons, Berlin Hisel, Rosco Brong, E. G. Cook, and Roy Mason are no more. Most of our preachers are middle aged or older. In 10 to 20 years most of the present population will be no more. Who will take our place? How many young preachers do we have who are sound? Who will teach the world the truth in the next generation? Will our doctrines all but fade from the American scene? God only knows.

A SOLUTION

None of the three pillars will fall to the ground unless we let them. We can reverse present trends. We could have a revival. We could rise up with united voices and defend the great truths which have distinguished our people in the past. Those of us left who still believe the old truths need to stand up and be counted. Truth needs no apology and error deserves none. Indeed, **"we are left but a few of many"** (Jer. 42:2) and what we do we must do quickly.

What should we do? I want to offer a very good suggestion. Why not have our able preachers to write a brief commentary on the New Testament? Such a book, or books, could remain to teach the next generation as well as the present. Look how the writings of Gill and Graves continue to

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A Brief Look at Our

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teach our people. I doubt that any preacher will live long enough to do this work by himself. I suggest that qualified men be assigned a book of the New Testament and then put these all together. Nothing is needed more than such a brief commentary in my opinion. We sorely need a Sovereign Grace, Landmark Bible Commentary on the New Testament. We have men capable of writing such. Then why not now?

FORECASTS FOR THE FUTURE

The forecasts I am about to give are based on present trends and observations of the past. They do not have to come to pass. We can change the future. No one would hope to change this future more than the writer of this article.

The churches and pastors will continue a gradual decline doctrinally and numerically. As the older pastors die, young men from other groups will take over a great many of our churches and lead them into Arminianism and universal church heresy. Bickering and backbiting will continue until we are hopelessly divided so that most cooperation among the churches will cease in missions, education, and publication work. A few sound preachers will be overworked, trying to preach and pastor the sound churches which remain. The present generation will leave behind very little written material to teach the next generation.

This is a dark and dismal picture, but I fear it will become a horrible reality in the next 10 to 20 years unless we wake up now!

Let me assure and reassure the readers of the BBB that as long as I keep my right mind and physical health I will do my best to keep the BBB in the mail. We will not

diminish from the three great pillars though all others forsake them.

"My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen" (I Cor. 16:24).



The Short Pews



Brief Articles
by Curtis Pugh
(1944 - 2018)

HOW MANY PATTERNS DO YOU NEED?

As a boy I remember my mother making her own dresses. In order to turn out the product she desired she followed a pattern, making sure to cut the material according to the proper shapes as dictated by the one pattern. She did not need nor make use of more than one pattern for each garment. One pattern was enough. It enabled her to reproduce the dress pictured on the pattern envelope.

We have a pattern in the New Testament showing how new churches were gathered and by whom and by what authority. We have no pattern in the New Testament of any group of scripturally baptized persons forming themselves into a church apart from an ordained man sent out by a previously existing scriptural church. There are some churches about which we know nothing, but the argument from silence proves nothing. All competent students of the Word are agreed: silence proves nothing! Those who do not insist on following this pattern claim that we just do not have sufficient patterns in the Bible. But, I ask, how many patterns did my mother need to make a garment? Only one was necessary to turn out what she wanted. And this preacher insists that the one pattern found in Acts

13:1-4 is a clear and sufficient revelation from God. Surely one is enough: we need no other!

Acts 13:1-4 is very instructive. It says: **"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost...."**

Notice these six things: (1) All the persons involved here were **"in the church that was at Antioch."** No freelancers here! (2) In the midst of their service (preaching?) and fasting (probably here in connection with prayer) the Holy Spirit made His will known regarding two of them. (3) It is stated that the Holy Spirit had called them (past tense) to this work. This explains the willingness of these men to go forth. (4) The congregation fasted, prayed and as a public demonstration of giving, these two church authority they laid their hands on them. (5) Then the church sent them away. Implied in that statement is that the church gave unto them money and other things they might need for their travels. (6) So it is stated that they were **"sent forth by the Holy Ghost"** - but not without the involvement of the congregation. Church involvement was a part of being sent forth by the Holy Spirit! Those who are familiar with the New Testament know that these men went forth making disciples, marking them by baptism, and maturing them by teaching them

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BEREA BAPTIST BANNER

Financial Report

5-1-2018 to 5-31-2018

Beginning Balance \$1,367.33

RECEIPTS:

Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX	50.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	300.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX	50.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV	200.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	300.00
Carol Willett, Edgewater, FL	50.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Faith B. C., Lynn, AR	12.50
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME	20.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	300.00
Grace B. C., Rural Hall, NC	50.00
Grace B. C., Tulsa, OK	35.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL	50.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
Landmark B. C., Moncks Corner, SC	100.00
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC	50.00
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY	35.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	100.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
Parkway Landmark B. C., Springfield, OR	100.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR	50.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS	25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX	30.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Subscriptions	16.00
Anonymous	710.00
Dividing checks	300.00
Sub Total	\$3,293.50
TOTAL	\$4,660.83

EXPENDITURES:

Printing	490.00
Postage	572.66
Wages	2,300.00
FICA	175.96
Supplies	0.00
Dividing checks	300.00
Bank Charge	13.00
Total Expenditures	\$3,851.62
ENDING BALANCE	\$809.21



BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST

Financial Report

5-1-2018 to 5-31-2018

Beginning Balance \$938.09

RECEIPTS:

Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	200.00
Calvary Ind. B. C., Sumas, WA	200.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	300.00
.....	925.00
TOTAL	1,863.09

EXPENDITURES:

Radio Time	200.00
Bank charge	10.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	210.00
Interest	+0.01
ENDING BALANCE	\$1,653.10

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Northport, AL and Pastor Todd Bryant will be having their 2018 Summer Bible Conference, July 27th thru 29th.

This year's theme is "Applying His Attributes."

The scheduled speakers are Elders Tom Horn, Chad Beck, Brian Farley and Jacob West.

Service times are Friday 7:00 p.m., Saturday 10:00 a.m., and Sunday 10:00 a.m.

All are invited to attend.

The Philadelphia Baptist Church of Decatur, AL and Pastor Doyal Thomas will be having their Annual Fellowship Meeting September 14th thru 16th.

Scheduled speakers are Elders John Pruitt and Eldon Joslin.

Service times are Friday 7:00 p.m., Saturday 10:00 a.m. with lunch provided, and Sunday 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

All are invited to attend.

The Harmony Baptist Church of Godfrey, IL is seeking God's man to lead us forward. We are not a large congregation, but we have unity and a love for God and His truth. We are seeking a full time Pastor to lead us. You can learn more about us on our website: hbcgodfrey.com.

Interested candidates can contact Brother Dave Gaworski: davemaryb1@yahoo.com.

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Wake Forest, NC is in need of a pastor. For more information, please contact Titus Dickerson at (919) 570-6178 or email info@sgbc-wakeforest.org.

The Grace Bible Baptist Church of Denham Springs, LA is in search of a pastor.

For a statement of faith you can visit the church website at <http://GraceBibleBaptist.webhop.org> or <http://gracebbc.dyndns.org:81/>.

You may contact any of the following for more information: Keith Laurence (225) 664-3557, Lucien LeSage (225) 803-9710, Charlie Andrews (225) 200-1171, or Joey Newell (225) 772-9158.

The Grace Missionary Baptist Church of Marion, IL is seeking a pastor. Please contact Gary Ratley at (618) 841-0228 for more information.

The Lord's Baptist Church in Tacoma Washington is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact Gaylen Russell at 360-879-5565 (home) or 253-495-4567 (cell) or by Email: gaylenr@rainierconnect.com.

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Caldwell, KS is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact the church in writing at SGBC, 400 N. Main St., Caldwell, KS 67022, or by phone Brother Darin Wiley 620-863-2431.

The Victory Baptist Church of Chehalis, Washington is in need of a pastor. Any interested brother may call Gerry Greisen at (360) 985-7975, or Mark Fenison at (360) 751-2929.

The Short Pews

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– they carried out the commission Christ left to His church. Being members of that congregation and having been authorized by her, they were laboring on behalf of that church to fulfill the commission given to Christ's churches. It is also significant and stated in other places in the Book of Acts that Paul always returned to his home-church after each of his evangelistic/baptizing/teaching tours.

Today, we are told by some Brethren that this pattern is insufficient and has no bearing on how mission work is to be done or how new churches are to be started. Those who give to a group of scripturally baptized folk the authority to organize themselves into a church do so without any Biblical basis. There is no statement in the Bible saying that baptized folk have such authority. Nor is there any example in the New Testament of a group of scripturally baptized folk who are stated to have independently formed themselves into a scriptural church. In fact, is there any statement in the New Testament giving scripturally baptized folk any authority other than to serve Christ in one of His churches? Theirs is a theory based on silence which proves nothing whatsoever. Does silence prove that Cain killed his brother with a stone?

We are only told that "Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him" (Gen. 4:8). We may surmise about a great many things in the Bible because of that Book's silence, but we dare not presume to challenge clear statements in the Bible with our suppositions. Whatever spontaneous-combustion-theorists may say about us, at least we do have and do follow a pattern found in the Word of God!

Those who espouse this "spontaneous combustion theory" - those who claim that scripturally baptized folk have authority to start a church apart from an ordained man sent by a previously existing church – those people, to my knowledge, refuse to address the question as to whether or not members may dismiss themselves from membership in a scriptural church for whatever reason. And this preacher has found none who address the question as to whether or not excluded members of a scriptural church may form themselves together and by their own independent act constitute themselves into a church. It would seem that they disregard the authority of sister congregations to discipline their members by giving them the authority as excluded members to organize themselves into a new church. Do such men even believe in church discipline?

By their pattern-less doctrine – that is, that scripturally baptized persons, even excluded ones, may constitute themselves into a church – they seem to be saying that at least some of the Campbellite churches are scriptural. After all, the first Campbellite churches were self-constituted congregations made up of scripturally baptized Baptists who had been excluded from various Baptist congregations. Selah!



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